

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

6 September 1985

NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer  
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: SDI

1. Here are some words on SDI.
2. My original thought was to provide material for your own use, either as talking points or for anything you may choose to write. But as I got rolling, it occurred to me that these words could be used by the President himself. My first choice would be for use as an opening statement at next week's press conference. Second choice is for use during an upcoming Saturday radio address.
3. I do realize that for the President himself to draw an analogy between SDI and our national attack on cancer is politically risky. No doubt little people will protest that this is much too hot a potato for him to touch. I think it's time to push past the little people, and to let the President make up his own mind. It's too late now to win with bunts, walks, and punched singles up the middle. We need a home run, and this President has what it takes to belt this one into the bleachers.



Herbert E. Meyer

Attachment:  
As stated

WHY SDI MUST GO FORWARD

1. For the life of me I cannot understand people who talk about SDI as though it were a new kind of danger. These people have lost the distinction between the virus and the vaccine that prevents it. In this case, nuclear war is the virus. SDI is the vaccine.

2. Let me continue for a moment with this medical analogy: For several years now, we Americans have been spending more than \$1 billion annually to reduce the scourge of cancer. The good news is that we're making a lot of progress. We're developing what Pentagon officials would call a "layered defense," made up of preventative medicine such as good dietary habits and regular check-ups, surgery, chemotherapy, and a variety of new, very promising high-technology treatments such as bone marrow transplants. Today cancer is no longer the sure killer that it used to be, and there's every reason to hope that in just a few years the final barriers to success will begin to fall.

3. Our national attack on cancer is a non-partisan, purely management project. We give our experts as much money as they believe they can prudently spend--not a dollar more, and not a dollar less. Naturally there are differences of opinion or judgment among experts, and frequent debates by program managers over whether to put a few dollars more in this project or that one, or whether one line of research is likely to offer a bigger payoff than another.

4. The one thing that never enters this issue is politics. No member of Congress has ever suggested that he'd offer his support on some bill or another if we'd adjust the attack on cancer to suit his preferences. No one has ever made the obscene suggestion that he'd support us on some issue if, in return, we would slow down or otherwise impede our attack on cancer. No one ever will.

5. Nuclear war, should it come, would kill more people than cancer and all other illnesses combined. SDI--which really means a variety of technologies and systems all working together to reduce the possibility of missiles ever being launched, and the possibility that if launched they would ever hurt people--is the surest way to make ourselves safe. We've got to move forward by giving our scientists as much money as they can prudently spend--not a dollar more, not a dollar less. Of course we expect disagreements about how best to manage SDI. And of course we're willing to negotiate with anyone over management issues--as we are doing now with our key allies. You'll recall that during the 1984 Presidential campaign, we offered to share SDI technology with the Soviets once we've worked it out. And at Geneva we've even offered to discuss SDI with the Soviets. Certainly at the upcoming Summit we would be willing to talk with the Soviets about how both superpowers could make the strategic transition from the purely offensive arsenals we have now to more stable arsenals that would include a mixture of offense and defense.

6. But negotiating over the idea of SDI itself would be irresponsible and even immoral. SDI is the best hope for preventing nuclear war. How on earth that hope could be a "bargaining chip" is beyond me.